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*Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person,
it is born between people collectively searching for truth,
in the process of their dialogic interaction.*
– Mikhail Bakhtin

During a faculty meeting in the spring of 2015, NUGSE professors brainstormed ways that students could gain more experience participating in research and sharing their work on a wider scale. The idea for this journal came out of that meeting and subsequent discussions with faculty, students, and alumni over the next year. Now we celebrate our fifth issue, beginning our third year as the first English-language, student-run, peer-review journal in Kazakhstan. In that time, we have grown and established a working model for a successful journal.

With growth, however, comes change. This will be my last issue as Chief Editor, as I move on to the next chapter of my career. This journal has been a great source of inspiration for me professionally, as it has tested my limits to foster collaboration and student leadership. I have learned the constant importance of open discussion and the occasional need for executive decision-making, not to mention the organizational skills needed to set – and keep – deadlines through the multiple stages of the peer review and publication process. And through this labor I have been rewarded with example after example of students and alumni surprising me with their thoughtful debates, creative ideas, and persistent work to make this journal a reality.

My departure offers a unique opportunity for the journal to redefine itself through new leadership and a new chapter in its history. Dilara Orynassarova, a PhD student who has served as a co-managing editor in the past three issues, will take a more central role in the journal. This is an intentional shift away from faculty leadership to more systematic student leadership. While this is an opportunity for growth, it will also be a test of the journal's foundation and community investment. The journal is not a “what”, but a “who”, and it only exists through the effort of a group of “people collectively searching for truth”. In the coming year, it will be more important for students and alumni to take initiative as authors, peer reviewers and editors.

This issue offers three peer-reviewed articles and three editorials. A common thread found in the articles is the numerous reforms and innovations occurring in Kazakhstan today. We continue the new tradition of designing the journal's cover as an artistic representation of the Featured Article. This distinction is awarded by the editorial review board after they read the abstracts of the issue's selected articles. The article they select is in their view the most significant, timely, well-written, rigorous, or innovative study. We hope you will be as eager as they are to read the full text.

Zulyar Kavashev explores a brand-new field of technology-enhanced learning emerging in Kazakhstan. His analytical paper explains how massive open online courses (MOOCs) can be leveraged by HEIs to reach a wider audience and support student learning, while promoting their brand and improving their competitiveness. And, as these changes are occurring in a reform-intensive environment, the author takes into account the relationship of the *Digital Kazakhstan* state program to its implementation in higher education. The author sagely points out that the program's lack of specific steps to follow gives the country's HEIs the opportunity, and perhaps the responsibility, to explore these newly available digital resources and conscientiously incorporate them in the routine work of academia.

Lyutsiya Adilzhanova, Ulyana Ixanova, and Alyona Kaus present another innovation in secondary school education. While not a technological advancement, enrichment clusters are shown to promote functional literacy, increase student engagement, and reduce the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge. The authors situate their study in the context of international high-stakes testing, highlighting that Kazakhstani secondary education has work to do in preparing students to meet ever-changing, ever-increasing challenges. This systematic desk-based study offers policy recommendations for how teachers can better support this development, and how administrators can better support teachers doing this important work.

In a small-scale qualitative study, Dinara Akhmetova returns the reader to the question of technology use in higher education. However, instead of addressing the policy implementation as first article did, the author aims to understand how technology can best be used to manage the teaching and learning process. In particular, this article highlights the human experience of master's students balancing their multiple commitments in their professional, personal, and academic lives. As we learn, this balance can be difficult to achieve: online learning certainly gives advantages of flexibility and autonomous learning, but managing the added work can require certain learner strategies, as well as administrative and pedagogical supports. These strategies, supports, and areas for future study in this innovative field will be valuable for any reader interested in receiving or providing education online.

The editorials present reflections on two important aspects of professional scholarly work: responding to peer review and criticism and conducting large-scale research under a state grant. First, Olessya Akimenko responds to the critical review published in the previous issue. Her editorial is part critical debate, part scholarly reflection, as she engages in a debate and works to find common ground with her critic. This is an exercise in respectful dialogue about scholarly work, where the authors must remind themselves to focus on the ideas, not the person. We hope that other readers will submit critical reviews in the future to keep this dialogue going, and to spark others.

The next two pieces come as a pair. The first, the executive summary of a recently completed national study completed by NUGSE faculty and other collaborators, serves as an example of professional scholarly work into the funding mechanisms of higher education that may work in Kazakhstan. As this type of work is not the primary focus of our journal, we include with it the second, an interview with one of the project's main investigators. Our editors elicit an insightful discussion about collaborative research, grant writing, and educational reform in Kazakhstan. There are numerous lessons to be learned, and this interview is yet another reminder of the importance of sitting down with our colleagues and seeking out the answers to the questions we have.

As always, our community is open to you. In fact, it depends on you. If you are wanting to get involved, don't think twice. Register online. Join our group on Facebook. Become a peer reviewer. Submit an article. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

D. Philip Montgomery
Chief Editor